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Special Delivery

03.07.2013 | Students, Research, Campus and Community

President Dan Curran has shaken the hands of more than 20,000 graduates as they received their degrees, but this one will always stand out.

On Feb. 11, Curran departed from a Greenville, S.C., luncheon in Charlie Warth's honor to drive to the dying man's home to present him with his long-overdue University of Dayton diploma in front of a dozen family members and friends.

It was an impromptu moment filled with tears and joy — and gratitude.

"That was Charlie's last fully lucid day. We made it in the nick of time," said his brother, Phil, a 1969 University of Dayton graduate who contacted Curran after Charlie, 60, was diagnosed with stage-four lung cancer in October 2011.

Nearly four decades earlier, Warth left UD just four credit hours short of his degree. Though he earned college credit later, he never transferred it.

As executive director of Allen Economic Development Corp., Warth devoted much of his life to expanding affordable housing for low-income families — and even lived in a modest house among the people he served. That's why the city of Greenville, S.C., named a day in Warth's honor and planned to celebrate his "graduation" at a luncheon.

"At 10:30 a.m., he was dressed and ready to go, but he was just too weak to go," Phil said. "Once he started to slip away, it happened fast."

Curran called Warth "the type of person we're proud to call a graduate" at a luncheon teeming with 200 people.

"At the University of Dayton, we emphasize community, community, community. Charlie was living that charism, that mission," Curran said. "We're going to bring his diploma to him in person — and I'll shake the hand of a great alumnus of the University of Dayton."

His brother, Phil, described that emotional moment: "The University of Dayton's efforts were very, very much appreciated by Charlie and our family. More importantly, I believe the Greenville community was greatly impressed that Dan Curran traveled so far to present Charlie with the 'capstone' for his career and life."

Just two days later, Charlie died.

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